



Virginia Commission on Youth

November 9, 2011

10:00 a.m.

House Room C

MINUTES

Attending:

Senators Yvonne Miller and Harry Blevins;
Delegates Robert Brink, Christopher Peace, and Beverly Sherwood;
Citizen Members Anthony Dale (electronically) and Joy Myers (electronically)

Not Attending:

Senator Edward Houck; Delegates Mamye BaCote, Mark Cole, and Anne Crockett-Stark; Citizen member Gary Close

Staff Attending:

Amy M. Atkinson, Leah Hamaker, Joyce Garner

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Senator Yvonne B. Miller

The Chair called the meeting to order at 10:10 and invited Commission members and staff to introduce themselves. She welcomed all members of the public to the Commission's third meeting in the 2011 study year.

II. 2011 Legislative Studies

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director

Leah Hamaker, Senior Legislative Policy Analyst

Study of School Enrollment Practices for Virginia's Kinship Caregivers

Ms. Atkinson thanked Senator Miller and Delegate Brink for their contributions as members of the study's Advisory Group. She then outlined the two-year history of the Commission on Youth's examination of issues related to kinship caregiving, specifically, the findings and recommendations of the 2010 Commission study which led to the 2011 study of school enrollment practices. She detailed the work of the Advisory Group and their attempts to reach consensus. A PowerPoint presentation enumerated 2011 study findings and recommendation.

Senator Blevins asked whether the Advisory Group considered the issue of people coming into Virginia from neighboring states, e.g., NC, MD. His concern related in part to extracurricular activities, specifically athletics, where a high-ranking team can attract students to a school so they can participate in that sport, with the goal of accessing lucrative college scholarships. Ms. Atkinson responded that the existing statute addresses school enrollment provisions for individuals residing outside the Commonwealth.

Delegate Peace, citing input from a constituent, expressed concern that the definition of "kinship caregiver" may be unclear, thus causing confusion.

Delegate Peace and Senator Blevins suggested that a \$250 fine for lying on the Affidavit might not discourage determined parents or grandparents from providing a school division with inaccurate, incomplete information.

Delegate Peace expressed concern that the recommendation, if enacted, could create a burden on schools to enforce compliance. He asked whether judicial reform would help clarify the kin/child relationship. He questioned whether there might be a tool between the Affidavit and a court order (for formal care)

Ms. Atkinson distributed a copy of written remarks submitted by Prince William County School superintendent.

In anticipation of receiving public comment from speakers, Senator Miller called the members' attention to the written comments received by the Commission. These were received from:

- ◆ Virginia Association of Secondary School Principals;
- ◆ Virginia Association of Community Services Boards;
- ◆ Voices for Virginia's Children, Virginia Poverty Law Center, and JustChildren;
- ◆ Henrico County Social Services;
- ◆ Lafayette High School/Norge Elementary School;
- ◆ Culpeper County Schools; and
- ◆ Pittsylvania County Schools.

Senator Miller opened the meeting to individuals/organizations signed up to speak:

- ◆ Cate Newbanks described her personal experiences as a grandparent caregiver and spoke in favor of the recommendation.
- ◆ Michelle Lauter Cowling spoke to her work as Director of New Kent DSS and voiced support for the recommendation.
- ◆ Lisa Bennett, Managing Attorney of JustChildren, summarized highlights of the written support of the recommendation which was submitted jointly by JustChildren, Voices for Virginia's Children, and the Poverty Law Center. She noted that she had requested the Commission incorporate her draft language in order to expedite the students' records.
- ◆ Wendell Roberts, Staff Attorney of the Virginia School Board Association, advocated formal custody.

In discussion, Senator Blevins voiced concern that relaxing policies could result in further school overcrowding. Schools often don't have room for students who are legally, legitimately entitled to attend. While he empathizes with all who seek a better life and/or a good education, he encouraged careful attention to ramifications of a policy change that might exacerbate an already stressed situation.

Senator Miller thanked all who commented, verbally or in writing, and invited a motion on the study recommendation.

Delegate Peace moved to request staff to have legislation drawn such that Commission members could examine proposed Code revisions and vote on recommendations at the December 19 meeting. Motion was seconded by Senator Blevins. Motion passed unanimously.

Update and Dissemination of the Collection of Evidence-based Practices for Children and Adolescents with Mental Health Treatment Needs

Ms. Hamaker outlined the history of the Collection and the progress of the dissemination of information on evidence-based practices within Virginia's community of mental health practitioners. One of the highlights of 2011 activities was establishment of a partnership with SCHEV and their investigation of what training/coursework was offered on evidence-based practices in their programs.

The study recommendations being presented address work in 2011 leading up to publication of the Collection's 5th Edition in 2013.

Senator Miller called for a motion. Delegate Peace moved to adopt all three recommendations. Delegate Brink seconded the motion.

Delegate Peace suggested that the Commission involve the Advisory Council for Autism which was authorized by 2010 legislation. Ms. Hamaker indicated that the Commission would invite the Council to appoint a representative to the study Advisory Group.

Delegate Brink asked whether the Commission would be able to rely on electronic versions or would have to use print versions to disseminate the information. Senator Miller commented that media is often critical of state agencies which do both. She asked Delegate Peace to assume the chair, so she could speak as an individual member. She subsequently reassumed the position, with thanks to Delegate Peace.

Senator Blevins again moved to adopt the study recommendations. Motion passed unanimously.

Comparison of Academic Achievement in Virginia and Leading Industrialized Nations

Ms. Atkinson presented on the status of Virginia achievement and the international and national entities which measure achievement globally.

Delegate Peace asked whether any studies had measured the correlation between race and achievement. Ms. Atkinson noted that there were measurements of the correlation between socio-economic level and achievement.

Senator Miller asked Delegate Peace to assume the chair, so she could speak as an individual member. As patron of the original SJR 320 which led to the Commission's undertaking this two-year study, Senator Miller expressed her concerns about the global disadvantage students in Virginia confront. She urged Commission staff, in the second year of the study, to involve institutions and organizations which serve and/or support diverse populations and understand the complex issues of school divisions having insufficient resources, due to lower local tax revenues.

She subsequently reassumed the position, with thanks to Delegate Peace.

III. Adjourn

Senator Miller reminded the Commission of its December 19th meeting and, with no further business, adjourned the meeting at 12:00 noon.